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SUBJECT: FEMINISM, CRONYISM, AND HONDURAN ELECTIONS: THE
LIKELY LOOK AND FEEL OF THE NEW CONGRESS

REF: (A) TEGUCIGALPA 2364
(B) TEGUCIGALPA 1612
(C) TEGUCIGALPA 1593

1. SUMMARY: With Honduran national elections taking place November 27, polls are beginning to flesh out what shape the 128-seat Honduran legislature will likely take. While it is uncertain if the 2004 Electoral Law mandating a quota at least 30 percent female participation will prove to be the cause or not, it does appear that a larger number of women will be elected to serve in the legislature this year. Additionally, it appears that Honduran political dynasties will remain intact through another election; the question will be whether these individuals were elected on their own merits or due to their family name. The only real certainty with the congressional elections, however, is that it will take a long time for the official dust to settle. END SUMMARY

2. On November 18, pollster Arturo Corrales of Ingenieria Gerencial, S.A., met with EmbOffs to share the results of his mid-November polling. His results were particularly interesting on female candidates and children of political heavyweights. In test voting conducted by his firm among a representative sample of voters in Tegucigalpa and San Pedro Sula, female candidates scored highly and look likely to do quite well in the elections.

3. While it is uncertain if the 2004 Electoral Law mandating a quota at least 30 percent female participation that boosted the number of female candidates will prove to be the cause or not (ref B), Corrales' results, combined with commentary from other Embassy contacts, make Post believe that it is likely that a larger number of women will be elected to serve in the legislature this year. Although many women are alternates rather than main candidates, it does appear evident that women are becoming a force unto themselves on the Honduran political scene. With a majority of likely voters being female, women's concerns may play a determining role in many congressional elections.

4. Corrales also reported that it is probable that the group of Honduran political dynasties will continue as the next generation is elected to congress (ref C). He noted that famous political offspring, some of them female, also scored highly in his company's test voting. While Corrales believes that those that are likely to be elected will do so mostly due to their own campaigning, there are many pundits that believe it is the family name (Flores, Azcona, etc.), rather than personal attributes, that will be the source for such votes.

5. The exact make-up of the Congress will take far longer to determine than the Presidency, with vote counting and the application of proportionality (ref A) expected to go very slowly (upwards of two weeks). One thing that appears to be very possible is that neither the National Party nor Liberal Party will have outright control of the legislature (a problem the Maduro Administration has confronted for four years). Although the two major parties are encouraging their party members to vote the entire party slate, it looks like most voters, especially in urban areas with higher education levels, will cross party lines to vote for some congressional candidates from other parties.

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